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Q N E S I M U S :

OR THE

**APOSTOLIC DIRECTIONS TO CHRISTIAN
MASTERS, IN REFERENCE TO THEIR
SLAVES, CONSIDERED. --**

BY EVANGELICUS.

BOSTON :
GOULD, KENDALL & LINCOLN,
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P R E F A C E.

The following essay is not designed to subserve the interests of any party. It aims to treat of the duty of masters, in the light of apostolic directions. In order, however, properly to apply these directions to the case of masters in our slaveholding States, it was necessary to show the similarity between the slavery now existing in those States, and that which formerly existed among those to whom the directions were originally given. An essential similarity between the two cases has been called in question. It was, plainly, incumbent on the writer to devote a portion of the essay to that topic.

Without meaning to bespeak favor, it may yet be proper to say, that injustice is often

done to an author's sentiments by dissociating the different parts of his work, and placing sentences, or paragraphs, either in an insulated position, or in wrong connections. A wholly unauthorized use may thus be made of his sentiments, or statements. The subject on which this essay treats, particularly requires that its different parts be viewed together.

It only remains for the writer to say, that he considers himself throughout as addressing *professed Christians*.

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THE
APOSTOLIC DIRECTIONS.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

THERE is not, nor could we justly expect there would be, a definitely settled state of public opinion on many questions connected with the existing system of American slavery. Northern Christians differ widely among themselves as to their opportunities of information respecting the facts in the case, and as to the various influences which, however insensibly, do really and strongly affect the judgments of individuals. And though they may be united, to a man, in an utter disapproval of the essential principle of slavery, yet many feel unable to form an established opinion respecting the immediate duty of

Christian masters in the southern States. And at the South, there is, doubtless, much vagueness of opinion, or at least of feeling, in regard to this subject, viewed both abstractly and practically, both with reference to immediate duty and prospectively. Many, however, in both sections of the country, have formed their opinions and purposes, whether wisely or unwisely, we say not. It is well worthy of consideration, whether there may not be a mutual misunderstanding between many Christian brethren respectively, at the North and at the South, since in such a case there is ground for alienation and asperity, which might at least be softened by frank explanations.

We might expect, beforehand, that there would be real diversities of opinion on this subject between numerous individuals in the northern section of our country, and numerous individuals at the South, all of them conscientious and anxious, perhaps equally so, to know and to do what is right. The circumstances, in which the citizens of these two divisions of our country are

placed, are extremely diverse. The great mass of northern residents have not a personal acquaintance with the actual domestic state, or the social and political connections, of their southern fellow-citizens. From the fact of their having been born and educated in a free community, they are led to look at the darker features of the subject; and not a few embrace conclusions which leave out of view the very different circumstances of persons in other communities than their own. On the other hand, southern residents, born and educated on the soil of slavery, naturally look at the milder features of the subject, and dwell with complacency on those views of it, by which they think it may, temporarily at least, be regarded as compatible with refined humanity. A false method of reasoning, too, may have become habitual to some of them; and because slavery has been overruled to the spiritual welfare of many benighted souls, and many converted slaves have been heard expressing gratitude that they were brought to this land where they have heard the gospel and felt its

saving power on their hearts, the conclusion has been leaped at and tenaciously maintained, that even God has given signs of his approval.

Nor ought it to surprise us that in many individuals belonging respectively to the two divisions of our country, there should be much sensitiveness and suspicion in regard to each other. Those who have been taught, among the lessons of their infancy, that every human being is entitled to civil rights, and that, in regard to rights, all men are born free and equal, cannot, without pain, contemplate communities in which these favorite principles are disregarded; nor can they, at once, divest themselves of a suspicion, that, in such communities, there is an unreasonable prejudice against a certain class, and a known infringement of religious obligations. On the other hand, those who have been nursed in such communities, do not regard themselves as worthy of censure for what they consider as the unavoidable circumstances of their condition, while they think themselves also endeavoring to act accord-

ing to Christian duty. The whole subject is viewed, by these two classes, respectively, from different points and in different aspects. On both sides, certain abstract principles, with their legitimate inferences, are kept in view, without being modified by other abstract principles, equally true and equally fruitful of inferences.

The momentous importance of the subject of slavery, in its social and moral bearings, and its repugnance to the cherished feelings of Christians, in the non-slaveholding States, will not allow it to be dismissed from public attention. The feeling of dislike to it is becoming deeper, and is gathering strength. At the same time, there is disagreement in the northern churches; not in regard to the essential character of slavery itself, but in regard to the duty of southern Christians towards their slaves, and the position which Christians of the free States ought to hold on this subject. In this state of things, while the disciples of the common Lord need both more light and more love, more confidence in one another's integrity and benevolence, and more

mutual accommodation, a frank and amicable discussion of the apostolic directions to masters may be of use to all. No one ought to demand more on this subject from his Christian brother, than an apostle demands. And no Christian ought to be contented with doing less.

PART II.

AMERICAN SLAVERY COMPARED WITH THAT WHICH OCCASIONED THE APOSTLE PAUL'S DIRECTIONS TO MASTERS.

WHETHER the relation, which the masters, addressed by the apostle, bore to their servants, was essentially the same as that which masters in our southern States bear to their slaves, is here, of course, a fundamental inquiry, and one which must be carefully examined. We may pursue this examination the more freely, as the result of it, whatever that may be, cannot decide the justifiableness of slavery. It is simply a question of fact, not of morality. If it shall appear that a close resemblance exists between the two cases, this circumstance alone cannot prove that the state of things in our country is right or wrong. It may, indeed, put us into a

position favorable for examining the moral part of the question.

That the relation of the masters, addressed by the apostle, was essentially the same as that of the slaveholder to his slaves; in other words, that the servants spoken of by him, were persons in servile bondage to their masters, has been the received opinion of Christendom. The grounds on which this opinion rests, are certainly strong. The passages of the apostles' writings, in which servants are addressed or spoken of, harmonize with this view. Let us examine the passages.

Eph. 6: 5, &c. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Compare Col. 3: 22, &c. In 1 Tim. 6: 1, we read,

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honor," &c. In Titus 2: 9, 10, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining; but showing all good fidelity." The directions of the apostle Peter also shed light on our present inquiry. 1 Pet. 2: 18, &c. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

Notice here the description of these persons: they are in a condition opposite to that of free-men; they are under the yoke. Notice the vices against which the apostle guards them—vices which are eminently those of a slave population: eye-service and stealing. Notice their liability

to be maltreated according to the caprice of irresponsible and haughty masters. Can there be any doubt that these servants were really slaves in the proper sense of the term? And if so, the masters, whom the apostle addressed as holding the corresponding relation, were really slaveholders.

The words, also, which the apostles employed to express the relation of servant, were familiarly employed by Greek writers when they designed, beyond all question, to convey the idea of *slave*. The term by which the apostle Paul, in 1 Tim. 6: 1, and Titus 2: 9, and the apostle Peter in his first epistle, 2: 18,* express the relation of master, is also the same as is currently employed by Greek writers to designate *masters of slaves*. Of this assertion the proof is abundant. The other term which the apostle Paul employed to convey the idea of master, as in Col. 4: 1,† is not generally, if at all, used by the classical writers as the correlative of slave. It has a wider use than the other word. The New Tes-

* Δεσποτης.

† Κυριος.

tament, however, does not, in regard to this word, imitate the classical distinction; but, together with its other significations, employs it evidently, by the contrast in which it stands, to designate the same relation which is expressed by the other word. Whether in writing *of* the relation, as in the above-mentioned passages of Paul and Peter, the harsher term was considered more proper; while in writing *to* those who were masters, the milder and more honorable epithet was considered more suitable, we have not the means of determining.

Let us now pass to another view. It must be remembered, that long before the introduction of Christianity, and during the life-time of the apostles, and long after, the Roman empire embraced the civilized world. Its customs and institutions were every where established, or were incorporated with regulations previously existing in regions which had become subject to its dominion. The Roman sway extended over the cities and districts where the apostles planted Christian churches; so that those churches

arose in the midst of Roman institutions, and consisted of persons whose modes of life, and whose relations to one another, were regulated by those institutions. Converted servants, or slaves, and converted masters, were gathered into Christian churches. It is important, then, to ascertain, if we can, what was the character of the slavery which prevailed in the Roman empire. For the question we are investigating is, whether the mutual relation of master and servant in the apostolic times and among the people to whom the apostles wrote, was essentially the same as that which now exists in our southern States? And thus there is no need of encumbering the topic under discussion with any inquiries pertaining to the servitude which existed among the Hebrews. Indeed, it would be preposterous to suppose that the customs of the Roman empire were regulated by the Jewish statutes.

We must refer to standard authorities, on the subject of slavery in the Roman empire, both as to its essential qualities and as to its circum-

stances. From Adam's Roman Antiquities, a few statements will now be presented by which a comparison may at once be made between the slavery existing in the apostles' time, and that which now exists in our country. This author quotes original Roman writers for confirmation of his statements. The more recent European writers on the same subject, agree with him. We learn, then, from these authorities, that among the Romans, slaves were regarded as the property of their masters, and like other property were bought and sold. They were considered as *things*, rather than as persons. They could not appear as witnesses in a court of justice; nor were they allowed, except by the sufferance of a kind master, to make a will, or to inherit any thing. The children of a female slave became slaves to her master; so that the servitude was hereditary. There was not a regular and permanent state of marriage among the slaves.

Such was the slavery, according to its essential qualities, which prevailed in the empire at the introduction of the gospel; and it was in

view of such a state of things, that the apostles spread the gospel, and gave the instructions to masters and servants which we find in their epistles. Every one knows, that the qualities above presented still live in the system of American slavery. There is, to some extent, a difference, not however in point of law, on the subject of marriage. Marriage among the slaves is, in our country, regarded with a degree of sacredness. Still, it must be obvious, insuperable obstacles to a just view of the marriage relation will exist, so long as masters have a legal right, and exercise their legal right, to sunder the connection according as their convenience, or interest, may suggest.

We have now looked at what may be called the *essentials* of slavery, and have seen that between the system which existed in the time of the apostles, and in the regions where they gathered Christian churches, and that which exists in our southern States, there is an exact resemblance. The one seems almost the copy of the other. Let us now turn to some of the

circumstances of the two systems, and notice how the case stands. Among the Romans, then, till the time of the Antonines, in the second century of the Christian era, masters had absolute power over their slaves; they could put them to death at pleasure. Partial attempts had, indeed, been made before their time to restrain this power; but an effectual check appears not to have been applied until the time just stated.* With absolute power over the life of the slave, it could scarcely be otherwise than that severe scourging, and a variety of torments would be matters of perpetual occurrence. Such was the fact to a mournful extent. The capriciousness

* From the researches of Heineccius in Roman jurisprudence, (*Antiquitatum Romanarum Jurisprudentiam Illustrantium Syntagma*,) it appears that efforts on the part of the Roman emperors to restrain the cruelty and to limit the power of masters, commenced with Augustus, in whose reign our Saviour was born. The emperor Claudius also made regulations to the same effect. Hadrian, who died A. D. 138, abolished some of the severe modes of punishment and particularly forbade the taking of the slave's life, unless by the authority of the magistrate. Antoninus Pius, who died A. D. 161, carried this merciful intervention still further; and in the reign of Constantine the Great, who died A. D. 337, a master who had, through severe punishment, caused the death of his slave, or of set purpose had taken his life, was held guilty of homicide.

of the master had little to interfere with its indulgence. As a specimen of the extent to which caprice would lead, it may be stated that in case of a master's being murdered by some person, or persons, unknown, all his domestic slaves were liable to be put to death. In American slavery, it is well known, the master is not allowed absolute power over his slave. The law of the land does profess, to some extent, to limit and restrain his power and to take the unhappy slave under its protection. A wanton killing, or maiming, of a slave, by his master, is an indictable offence. So far, the American system has, undoubtedly, an advantage above that of the Roman empire, at least till some time after the introduction of Christianity. The mild influences of Christianity, and of modern civilization, are also felt in the treatment of the slave. And, in all probability, while these influences have had an effect on legislative provision, it is these, too, rather than the dread of law, which mitigate, to such an extent as does actually exist, the

rigors of an involuntary and hereditary bondage. For it can hardly be supposed, that, in a slaveholding community, a violation of the laws which protect the slave would, except in very extreme cases, be likely to find an informer, or an impartial jury; particularly, if the violator of the law were a man of distinction. "Legislation," it has been well said, "can never effectually protect a being who is the property of another."

In two circumstances, at least, and those of great moment, the Roman system was decidedly milder than the American. In most of our slave States, it is well known, the laws absolutely prohibit the instructing of slaves to read and write. But among the Romans, slaves, if they manifested inclination and capacity, were instructed in literature and the liberal arts. From among them were taken, not only *laborers* in domestic service, in agriculture, and other manual employments, but also physicians, surgeons, and secretaries. Some of them, too, were really learned men. As an offset, however, to the advantage of being

thus fitted for more elevated employments, it must be stated, that such slaves were greatly enhanced as to their pecuniary value, and were sometimes sold at an enormous price. According to Plutarch, the wealthy Crassus obtained from this source a principal part of his riches.

The other circumstance, in which the Roman system of slavery was less burdensome, both to master and to slave, consisted in the power of emancipating the slave from bondage. In almost every one of our slave States, the laws utterly forbid the master to grant freedom to his slaves, except by a special act of the legislature, or unless they be removed beyond the jurisdiction of the State. In almost all cases, this amounts to an absolute prohibition. Neither during his life-time, nor by will at his death, can a master gratify the impulses of benevolence, or comply with what he may feel to be the dictates of Christian principle, by terminating his slave's bondage, unless provision be made for the servant's removal to some free commonwealth. A slave, set at liberty by his master in violation of

the law, is liable to seizure and public sale.* But throughout the Roman empire, the master enjoyed the right of liberating his slaves. This he could do by various legal forms; and though all these forms did not secure to the freedman the rights of citizenship, they yet secured to him deliverance from bondage. The right, which the Romans thus enjoyed, was exercised, and abused. For, by means of it, many worthless and troublesome slaves were set at liberty, who could become only nuisances to society. In consequence of the multiplication of such cases, the laws regulating emancipation were subsequently modified, so as to restrain this right within certain limits. At length it came to be

* It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to say, that every particular, respecting American slavery, introduced in this essay, may not be applicable to *each* State. It is to the purpose, however, to mention regulations of an embarrassing nature, which exist in any one of the States. It is more important to remark that, probably in all the slave-holding States, there are methods by which a master may favor his slaves with a species of nominal freedom. Such a freedom, however, it is believed, is not recognized by the laws. The laws hold even such a master responsible in regard to those slaves; and the nominal liberty which he grants them, is liable to be interrupted by a change in his disposition or circumstances—by his death, and by various unforeseen occurrences.

the law, that a master might liberate only a certain proportion of his servants; and however numerous a household he had, he was not allowed to free, by his will, more than a hundred. Never, however, was the power of emancipating wholly taken away, nor hedged about with so effective hindrances as in our southern States.*

* There were some circumstances which rendered manumission more likely to occur among the Romans than among us. Many of their slaves were reduced to this condition from being taken captives in war; for conquered enemies, who did not voluntarily surrender, were, as a matter of course, taken as slaves. There would, consequently, be among their slaves a very considerable diversity as to intelligence and information, and as to external characteristics, particularly as to color. It was therefore the case, that however in theory the condition of a slave was one of extreme degradation, yet the personal qualities of many a slave would be such as to insure respect, and there would be no prejudice arising from color, unfavorable to his being admitted to the rights of a citizen. Among us, however, intellectual inferiority, whether natural or only the result of circumstances, is an almost universal characteristic of the slave population; so that there is felt to be an immense distance between the slaves and their masters. In addition, their difference in point of color from their masters, operates greatly (unjustly, no doubt,) to their disadvantage, and has a powerful influence in cherishing among the masters a feeling which opposes their being admitted to the possession of equal rights. This happens, too, without necessarily generating an unkind and bitter spirit towards the slaves, viewed *as such*; for, to apply, with some little alteration, the language of Mr. Bancroft, (*History of the United States*), in describing Oglethorpe, "there are men filled with the sentiment of humanity, yet having a predilection for the institutions of aristocracy—willing to protect the humble, rather than to surrender power and establish equality."

To the preceding statements may be added the following extract from the Roman laws themselves, as presented in the code of Justinian.

“Slaves are in the power of their masters. . . . In all nations, we know that masters have had the power of life and death over their slaves; and whatever is acquired by the slave, belongs to his master. But, at the present time, no men, who are under our sway, are allowed, without legal cause, to exercise undue severity towards their slaves. For, by the decree of the divine Antoninus, whoever should kill his own slave without cause, is condemned to be punished not less than if he had killed another man’s. . . . Antoninus also ordained, that if masters exercised an intolerable cruelty, they should be compelled to sell their slaves on good terms, and the price should be given to the masters. And very rightly; for the good of the State requires that no man should make a bad use of his property.” Justiniani Institutiones, Liber I. Tit. VIII.

From the well known History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by Gibbon, the

following paragraphs are selected. "The perfect settlement of the Roman empire was preceded by ages of violence and rapine. The slaves consisted, for the most part, of barbarian captives, taken in thousands by the chance of war, purchased at a vile price, accustomed to a life of independence, and impatient to break and to revenge their fetters. Against such internal enemies, whose desperate insurrections had more than once reduced the republic to the brink of destruction, the most severe regulations and the most cruel treatment seemed almost justified by the great law of self-preservation. But when the principal nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa, were united under the laws of one sovereign, the source of foreign supplies flowed with much less abundance, and the Romans were reduced to the milder, but more tedious, method of propagation. In their numerous families, and particularly in their country estates, they encouraged the marriage of their slaves. The sentiments of nature, the habits of education, and the possession of a dependent species of property, contrib-

uted to alleviate the hardships of servitude. The existence of a slave became an object of greater value; and though his happiness still depended on the temper and circumstances of the master, the humanity of the latter, instead of being restrained by fear, was encouraged by the sense of his own interest. The progress of manners was accelerated by the virtue, or policy of the emperors, and by the edicts of Hadrian and the Antonines the protection of the laws was extended to the most abject part of mankind. The jurisdiction of life and death over the slaves, a power long exercised and often abused, was taken out of private hands, and reserved to the magistrates alone. The subterraneous prisons were abolished; and, upon a just complaint of intolerable treatment, the injured slave obtained either his deliverance, or a less cruel master.

“Hope, the best comfort of our imperfect condition, was not denied to the Roman slave; and if he had any opportunity of rendering himself either useful or agreeable, he might very naturally expect that the diligence and fidelity of a

few years would be rewarded with the inestimable gift of freedom. The benevolence of the master was so frequently prompted by the meaner suggestions of vanity and avarice, that the laws found it more necessary to restrain than to encourage a profuse and undistinguished liberality, which might degenerate into a very dangerous abuse. It was a maxim of ancient jurisprudence, that a slave had not any country of his own; he acquired with his liberty an admission into the political society of which his patron was a member. The consequences of this maxim would have prostituted the privileges of the Roman city to a mean and promiscuous multitude. Some seasonable exceptions were therefore provided; and the honorable distinction was confined to such slaves only, as for just causes, and with the approbation of the magistrate, should receive a solemn and legal manumission. Even these chosen freedmen obtained no more than the private rights of citizens, and were rigorously excluded from civil or military honors. Whatever might be the merit or fortune of their

sons, *they* likewise were esteemed unworthy of a seat in the senate; nor were the traces of a servile origin allowed to be completely obliterated till the third or fourth generation. Without destroying the distinction of ranks, a distant prospect of freedom and honors was presented, even to those whom pride and prejudice almost disdained to number among the human species."

Chapter II.*

* The Christian Fathers, who lived in the midst of Roman institutions, through several centuries after the apostles' times, make such allusions to a state of slavery, as clearly show that the long-established system of servile bondage was still in being.

The following extract from the learned work of Augusti, on the Antiquities of the Christian Church, (*Denkwürdigkeiten aus der christlichen Archäologie*), is explicit and decisive in regard to the early periods of the Christian era. Speaking of the baptism of slaves, he says:—"These were regarded, according to the Roman law, not as persons, but as things; and could not therefore enter independently into obligations, but must, just as children, &c., be represented [by another.] The Apostolical Constitutions," (a book of ecclesiastical regulations, belonging, as the regulations were introduced by degrees, to the third and fourth centuries,) "required that the slave of a master, who was not a Christian, should not be admitted to baptism without his master's consent; and respecting the slave of a Christian master, the following is the direction: 'If he be the servant of a believer, let his master be asked, whether he can testify in his favor; and if he cannot, let the servant be put off until he gains the good opinion of his master; but if his master can thus testify, let him be admitted.' " 7 Bd. p.332.

For an instructive and deeply interesting view of "Roman Slavery, in the early centuries of the Christian era," see the *Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer*, vol. VI. article iv. page 411.

This part of the subject need be pursued no further. The resemblance, in point of condition, between the masters whom the apostle Paul addressed, and those of the present day at the South, renders it proper to apply to the latter the directions originally given to the former.

PART III.

THE APOSTOLIC DIRECTIONS TO MASTERS, EX- AMINED.

This essay designs simply to exhibit the principles which are contained in the apostolic directions to masters. Indeed, those directions may be regarded as statements of general principles applicable to the case in hand; applicable in diverse ways, according to diversity of circumstances. The New Testament does not treat Christians as children, needing very precise and minute regulations, but as men, of enlightened judgment, and of tender conscience, inclined, through the influence of love and a sense of duty, to adopt in practice the principles which their Lord inculcates. The directions to masters are few and simple, yet comprehensive. In the epistle to the Ephesians, 6: 9, is the first to which

it is important to direct attention : "And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening." An examination of the preceding verses, in which servants are instructed, renders the expression, "*same things*," quite intelligible. It is as if the apostle had said, Conduct in a similar manner ; that is, with sincere good will towards them, and with a sense of religious obligation to your Master in heaven. The other expression, "*forbearing threatening*," needs no elaborate commentary. A harsh and severe method of speaking to them—an endeavor to intimidate them by a show of authority, and, by just consequence, severity of treatment, are forbidden. The master is evidently required to cherish towards his servants, both in language and conduct, a strict regard to benevolence.

Let us now pass to the epistle to the Colossians, 4: 1, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." On the Ephesians the apostle had enjoined a *kind* and *benevolent* course of treatment. On the Colossians he here enjoins a *just* and *equitable* course of conduct

towards their servants. The expression, "*that which is equal*," means *equity*; the same word which is here employed in the original, occurs also in 2 Corinthians, 8: 14, where it is rendered *equality*, and where the idea of equity, or equitable distribution, is perfectly obvious. "For I mean not," said the apostle, in the 13th verse, "that other men be eased, and you burdened; but (14th verse,) by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want: that their abundance also, may be a supply for your want; that there may be equality." The two companies, of which the apostle was speaking, were required, by a just distribution of benevolent duties, to sustain to one another an equitable proportion, so that neither should have reason to complain of the other. In the directions to the Colossians, then, the apostle enjoins that they should treat their servants with justice and equity.* Here, now, the apostle would bring the two parties, ser-

* The writer is not anxious here, to discriminate between these two words, or to avoid tautology. He wishes to retain, as nearly as possible, the apostle's expressions, in an attempt to present the apostle's idea.

vant and master, together ; and would have a just and equitable arrangement made as to burdens and enjoyments, as to labor and recompense. As the servant is so dependent on the master, this adjustment would need to be extended to a great variety of particulars. While the servant is to be profitable to the master by his labor, the master, on the other hand, is in a fair and equitable manner to provide for the servant's subsistence and happiness, with an endeavor that mutual justice be not in any respect violated. Into such an adjustment must enter a consideration of the servant's habitation, his clothing, his food, protection from harm, care of him in sickness and other distress, opportunities for mental improvement and religious instruction. Thus, on the apostle's principle, there would come to be an equitable—we do not say an *equal*, in the ordinary sense of that word, but an *equitable*—distribution, between the master and the servant, of labor and of profit ; and the master would be, so to speak, according to Chrysostom's idea, the slave of his servant, as well as the servant the slave of his

master; that is, the master would be careful to meet all the just claims of his servant on him, as well as the servant the claims of his master.

There is no need of further expanding this idea of the apostle. It is remarkably in accordance with his direction to the Ephesians; and though the terms he here employs are different, yet the practical operation of each rule, would lead to the same results. As furnishing a practical illustration of the spirit which the apostle enjoins, and as even extending its operation, we may refer to the case of Philemon and Onesimus. The apostle was careful to send back Onesimus to his master; but he was equally careful to appeal to the Christian sympathies of Philemon in behalf of Onesimus, beseeching him to treat henceforward on the principle of Christian love, as "a brother beloved," him whom he had been in the habit of regarding only as a slave. Precisely what Christian love required Philemon to do, Paul did not say. Nor was it needful. He submitted the case to Philemon's conscience and Christian affection, assured that he would comply

with what Christian love should require. By parity of reasoning, Christian masters are required to treat their Christian slaves on the principle of Christian love, as brethren in Christ ; and whatever would be contrary to the claims of Christian affection, they are to avoid.

Three points, now, we may consider made plain, as to the duty of Christian masters towards their slaves. First, they are to avoid severity, and are to act in a kind and benevolent manner. Second, they are to act according to mutual justice and equity. Third, they are to treat their Christian slaves according to the dictates of fraternal Christian love. In reference to this third point, it must be remarked, that while the New Testament evidently encourages Christian love as an affection belonging to the followers of Christ, viewed *as such*, it yet nowhere justifies an exclusiveness in our kind and compassionate regards. On the contrary, it enjoins universal love—love even to our enemies ; and exhibits as our pattern, the Father of all, who sends blessings on the evil as well as on the good. It

teaches us, and it strongly impresses this thought on masters in reference to their servants, that as God is no respecter of persons, so we should not be unfavorably influenced by the circumstances of any man's condition, however lowly; that we should feel towards him as a fellow-man and a brother of the human family. And thus the great law of love, so emphatically enjoined by our Lord, reaches the subject of which we are now speaking:—All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. This may, indeed, be considered as comprehending in its wide embrace all the directions which have been above presented; for certainly it is but a proper desire that others should abstain from severity towards us, should treat us with equity, and should regard us with Christian affection, if we be indeed the disciples of Jesus.

Such are the principles which the apostle enjoins; and in view of these, we need not perplex ourselves with the inquiry, Whether the New Testament does not tolerate slavery as a permanent condition. The views and feelings of the

apostle in regard to the slavery existing in his time, are sufficiently disclosed by these principles. To slavery, as well as to every other subject in which morality was concerned, he applied the requisitions of righteousness and benevolence. The principles he inculcated had a natural tendency, it is perfectly obvious, to modify slavery essentially, and ultimately, and by no very lengthened process, to change the slave's condition into that of a laborer, who should receive for his services a just and equitable compensation. If the apostle declined, then, to express any opinion directly, in regard to the real character of slavery, as legally viewed, his silence is not to be construed into an approval of it, or even an indifference towards it; nor again, into timidity. The peculiarity of the New Testament, as to its instructions in regard to civil and social institutions with which morality also is concerned, appears in its treatment of this subject. It does not pronounce sentence, either of approval or of disapproval, on such institutions. It addresses those who are concerned, and informs

them by what moral principles they are to regulate their conduct in reference to those institutions; and it leaves those principles silently and peacefully, yet surely, if they are adopted, to effect the needed changes. Thus, in regard to slavery: the gospel found a state of slavery existing; and without pronouncing on the question, whether such a state is right—or, whether a Christian may hold slaves,—it enforced on those whom it found sustaining the relation of masters, the fundamental law of love and equity in their treatment of slaves. It unfolded the principles by which the master ought to be regulated: principles, which were directly at variance with the mode, then current, of viewing slavery and treating the slave, and which could not fail, if allowed a fair operation, to modify essentially the relation which the master sustained. It left those principles to their legitimate operation on the consciences and hearts of Christians. It imbued the soul with a spirit of love, and placed every master on his personal responsibility to God in reducing to practice those principles. In all ages and

countries, those who act in accordance with these principles, act rightly ; he who disregards these principles, will not find the New Testament on his side. Instead of asking an abstract question, then, there should be a practical inquiry : Am I regulating my conduct by these principles ? And this inquiry should be applied, not in the gross, but with a reference to particular persons and particular topics ; topics, connected with the slave's subsistence and outward comfort, with his mental culture and opportunities for religious improvement. Each man ought to examine for himself, whether he, as an individual follower of Christ, is applying to all who are in subjection to him and dependent on him, and to all the circumstances and necessities of such, the just, benevolent and fraternal principles which the gospel enjoins, and which the gospel inspires. Nor ought any one to rest contented, until he is conscious that in his relation to his servants these principles are practically regarded.


The following passage from Neander's *History of the Planting of the Christian Church by the*

Apostles, is strikingly coincident with the views just expressed. Neander, it may be remarked, holds an eminent place among living writers as a profound philosophical historian. He says,—
“ When Paul speaks of the various relations of life which men sustained at their conversion, he established the rule that each one should continue in those relations—1 Cor. 7:20. Christianity did not force a man out of the relations in which his birth and education, and the providential disposal of his lot had placed him ; but it taught him to take a new view of those relations, and to conduct in them with a new disposition. It produced no sudden revolutions, but it made the condition entirely new, by virtue of the new views and disposition which it imparted to the soul. This rule the apostle applies to the particular relation in which the slaves stood. Their case eminently needed consideration, because the gospel, from its very commencement, being at first preached to the poor, found among them abundant success ; and because the feeling which Christianity imparted of the common dignity of

mankind and of human rights, might excite an endeavor to throw off the earthly yoke. In regard to them, too, Christianity, lest it should mingle worldly and spiritual things, and fail of its chief design—the salvation of souls—did not undertake to affect their relations in a sudden or violent manner. It relied on the mind and disposition for accomplishing needed changes in the outward condition. To servants, the gospel imparted a higher life, and thus elevated them above the level of their earthly relations; and although masters were not required by the apostles to give freedom to their servants, inasmuch as it was foreign to the apostles' province to interfere with the forms of civil relations, yet Christianity inspired in the masters such a sense of duty to their servants and such dispositions towards them, and it required them so to recognize as their brethren those slaves who had become Christians, that by that very circumstance their relation to their slaves would, in a voluntary manner on their part, undergo an alteration."*

* Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der christlichen Kirche durch die Apostel. 1 Band, 223.

There are, it must be granted, serious hindrances to the full application of these principles on the part of Christians at the South. They would lead to a course of conduct different in some important respects from that which prevails in slave-holding communities, and would carry to a higher point some of the instances in which a sense of duty requires Christians in such communities to differ from their neighbors. But Christians are required to come out from the world, and to be separate, as the Lord's peculiar people—the light of the world and the salt of the earth. And as Christian principle, illustrated by Christian example, has already done much for the benefit of the slave, so it is capable of accomplishing immensely more, not only with safety to society, but greatly to its advantage. It must also be conceded, that the laws in some of the slave-holding States are directly at variance with some of the claims which the apostles' directions would make for the well-being and elevation of the slave. The hindrances created by law to the operation of Christian benevolence and justice in



favor of the slave, are indeed regarded by many as an insuperable difficulty; and since it is clearly their duty, as peaceable citizens, to obey "the powers that be," they conceive that, in this clashing of duties, they must submit to the necessity of the case, and content themselves with doing for their slaves what they can, consistently with the laws. But, is the case, even at this point, so desperate as is generally presumed? None of our laws are laws of the Medes and Persians. When laws in these United States are felt to be unreasonable and oppressive, the people know where the remedy lies. Not the slightest hint is here intended to any turbulent or illegal measures. Our legislatures are accessible. Petitions to the proper body, respectful, and urgent, and persevering, have efficacy. More than this: the people themselves choose their rulers. In the exercise of their constitutional rights, they can re-elect the same men, or appoint others in their stead. The popular will is an essential element in our theory of government. Pious men may contribute to the forming of pub-

lic opinion, and consequently to the character of legislation, as much, to say the least, as other members of the community. Our legislatures are not bodies of men wielding a permanent authority, to whose dictation we must bow without relief. Men having such constitutional rights, have an equal responsibility. The language of just complaint, if it dies away in mere sighs, mistakes the character of our governmental principles, and the duty of free citizens. If the several sections of the Christian community, through a deeply conscientious regard to the authority of their Lord, and a wakeful interest in the elevation and improvement of their fellow-men, should use their right of suffrage with reference to this point, and perseveringly seek a repeal of existing legislative hindrances to the full discharge of their duty to their slaves, their voice would be heard. A removal of existing impediments might thus be obtained; so that every man could feel at liberty to do what his enlightened conscience and Christian benevolence require. And who can tell, how soon decided majorities

might be found in the various States concerned—among the people, and, as a consequence, in their legislatures—in favor of even positive enactments for the benefit of the slaves, besides those which already exist? It cannot indeed be thought a duty, in such a country as ours, violently to resist existing laws. Still, if any laws do evidently conflict with the claims of Christian duty, and if it be possible for conscientious men, by united and persevering efforts, to obtain a modification of those laws, is it not evident, that even though they may be doing now for their slaves all that they can, consistently with the laws, and so far may have a quiet conscience, it may still be required at their hands to seek, judiciously and earnestly, such changes in the laws, as that all the claims of Christian benevolence may be answered? And let no man think, that he is a cipher in the Christian community, or in the body politic. On some, indeed, of superior wisdom and station, a heavier responsibility rests than on others; because they influence the sentiments of others. But no man is so inferior as

to have no power to aid a work of Christian benevolence.

These last considerations help us to take a correct view of the manner in which the great law of love, the golden rule, bears on the case of Christian masters, who are embarrassed by legal enactments—Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. That is, Do to others as you could reasonably and properly wish them to do to you, were they in your condition and you in theirs. Suppose, now, that we were ourselves the slaves: we should wish, very reasonably, our masters to do for our welfare what they could consistently with all the existing circumstances in which we and they were placed. And if it were possible for them to effect, even to a slight extent, *a change in the circumstances* of the relation, so that they might consistently do more for us, we should doubtless regard that as a part of their duty. While circumstances remain as they are, then, Christian masters ought to be doing all that they legally can, and to be making a nearer and nearer ap-

proach to the high standard of Christian requisition ; and in the mean time to be making earnest and untiring efforts for the removal of those impediments which hinder the full operation of Christian benevolence and equity. Their course should be regulated, not by selfish principles, prompting them to seek their own interests exclusively, or even mainly, and regarding their slaves more as instruments of wealth, than as brethren of the human family ; but by benevolent and equitable principles, prompting them to love their lowly neighbor even as themselves, and to seek the mental and moral improvement, the present and the future happiness, of all around them, high and low, rich and poor, free and bond.

The natural consequences of such a course of treatment, any one must be blind not to see. It has been sufficiently shown in a former paragraph. It would, beyond a question, issue in the emancipation of the slaves. And let not such a prospect startle any one. This result would be most accordant with the genius of the gospel and with the spontaneous influence of Christian love. It

would, also, be effected in that peaceful and advantageous way in which Christianity has already accomplished so many revolutions among men. The immediate consequence, doubtless, would be to render slavery merely nominal, as to its bearing on the slave. Slavery, as now understood, would come to be a misnomer, and, by a process easily conceived of, would disappear. And thus there would be another illustration of the entire concord between the principles of the gospel and the principles of natural right, as well as a noble exemplification of the manner in which the religion of Jesus is adapted to leaven the whole mass of human society, producing, by its pervading, yet noiseless, influence on men's *sentiments*,* the most radical revolutions, without doing violence to any in its powerful march of benevolence. And O, what a work may be set forward by Southern Christians! They are the proper agents in it. Christians at the North may, indeed, render service in this work of human improvement and elevation, by encourag-

* That is, *their opinions and feelings combined.*

ing and cherishing, among those who are personally concerned, the spirit of Christian love and the sense of duty on which, according to the plan of the gospel, chief reliance is to be placed. But southern Christians are the proper laborers in this department of benevolence and duty. May they have the happiness and the honor of performing the work. . Let them with tenderness of spirit and with anxiety to know their Lord's will, examine the apostolic directions; let them ask counsel of one another and of God, and place themselves in the most favorable position for conferring the highest benefits, both temporal and spiritual, on those fellow-men and fellow-Christians, with whom they sustain so intimate a connection, and who are so dependent on their justice and benevolence.

It ought to be held as a settled point, that, among the triumphs of the gospel, the removal of slavery is to have a place. The evils and the woes, which cannot be separated from the system, are to have an end; and the relations between man and man are to be placed on a just and

equitable basis. The nature and the design of Christianity evidently point to this. We need no special voice from heaven to teach us that such is the will of God. This will is sufficiently manifested in the unavoidable results of slavery and in the directions of the New Testament. The moral relation, too, which all Christians sustain to one another, and especially that which exists between members of the same individual church, are almost perpetually felt by pious church-members in slave-holding communities to be incongruous with slavery. The idea of *Christian brother*, as required towards the slave who is a Christian, as well as towards any other pious man, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible in many circumstances, to realize in such communities. And on no point of duty are the conscience and the heart of a pious master so liable to be wounded, as on this. But why dwell on a thought which so often afflicts the soul of almost every southern Christian?

The preceding pages have treated solely on the moral, or Christian, view of the subject. With political and economical advantages, or disadvantages, to be expected from a full practical adoption of the apostolic directions, this essay has nothing to do. Of one thing we may rest assured; that, as the ways of God are equal, he would not allow a thorough conformity to his will to be otherwise than safe and advantageous. Our moral Governor is also the God of providence. And though temporary embarrassments might be occasioned by the endeavor to enter on a full and undeviating compliance with his will, yet those embarrassments would give place to permanent peace and prosperity; and even the temporary embarrassments would be found light, compared with the hazards and the actual evils permanently connected with a failure to give full scope to those principles of mutual benevolence and justice, which God has established for regulating the social relations of men.

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